

Lepidocephalus thermalis (Valenciennes)

Local name: Nakati; **English name:** Burmese loach.

Material examined: 1 ex., 36 mm TL, Bhikhanathori, Pandai river, Bihar, S.K. Mishra, 6 April 1978.

Diagnostic features: D ii 6; P i 6; V7; A ii 5; C 16.

Length of head 5.5, depth of body 9, both in total length. Eye diameter 3.1 in length of head, entirely in anterior half of head.

Barbels 4 pairs, rostral, inter-maxillary, maxillary and mental pairs.

Dorsal fin origin opposite to ventral fins, caudal fin slightly emarginate. Scales un conspicuous, about 30 rows between the anal fin abse and back. Lateral line absent.

Colour in life: Body yellow with iridiocytes on head, blotches on back and on lateral line; base of upper half of caudal fin with a black spot; a dark streak extending from eye to end of snout; dorsal fin with black spots, and four bands on caudal fin.

Distribution: India, coastal districts of Kerala, Karnataka and Maharashtra, and Sri Lanka. The present record is an addition to the ichthyofauna of Bihar.

KEY TO SPECIES *Lepidocephalus*

1. (a) Caudal fin with two dark spots encircled in white rings *L. amandalei* (Chaudhuri)
- (b) Caudal fin with one or numerous spots but not encircled in white rings.....2
2. (a) Length of head 6.5-6.7, depth of body 5.7-6.5 in total length *L. guntea* (Hamilton)
- (b) Length of head 5.5-6.0, depth of body 8.1-9.7 in total length *L. thermalis* (Valenciennes)

DISCUSSION

These loaches are bottom dwellers, found in swift streams, rivers and lakes of hilly areas and are able to burrow and quickly disappear, if alarmed. The spinous first pectoral ray helps in "digging in".

They are of little interest in fisheries but *Lepidocephalus thermalis* (Valenciennes) is valued as an aquarium fish. They are small but nourishing fish, eaten locally as they are not suitable for transport in fresh state, nor sufficiently common at any one place for large scale processing.

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27. ON *PUNTIUS SETNAI* CHHAPGAR AND SANE: NEW REPORT AND COMMENTS

(With a text-figure)

A barb, identical in description with *Puntius setnai*, described by Chhappgar and Sane (1992), has recently been collected from South Kannara (Hoshangadi, S. Kannara, Karnatak State, date of collection 2/9/1991, collected by S. Kamble, WRS, ZSI, Pune, reg. no. V/1516). According to the collector, the fish is very common in the shallow streams of the area.

A line drawing showing salient taxonomic features of the fish is presented here (Fig. 1).

Comments: This barb was first identified as *Puntius nigrofasciatus* on the basis of a few specimens collected by ZSI personnel from a rivulet in the forested area of Ponda, Goa (Yazdani 1977). The fish was described to possess three vertical bands on the body, serrations on the last undivided dorsal ray and complete lateral line with 20-22 scales. Barbels were found to

be absent. Fin-ray counts and other details of the specimens were not given (Yazdani 1977). Later, Chhappgar and Sane (1980) pointed out that the fish described by Yazdani (1977) is *Puntius narayani*. This statement was based on the observations carried out on the ZSI specimens mentioned above (fishes from a rivulet in Ponda, Goa, date of collection 13/12/73, name of the collector B.S. Lamba, determined as *P. nigrofasciatus* by G.M. Yazdani). Obviously these authors had overlooked the serrated nature of the dorsal spine.

While examining recent collections from S. Kannara, we came across these 3-banded barbels again. We found that the specimens are exactly like the ones collected from Ponda, Goa in 1973. The fish could not be easily placed anywhere in the latest key and

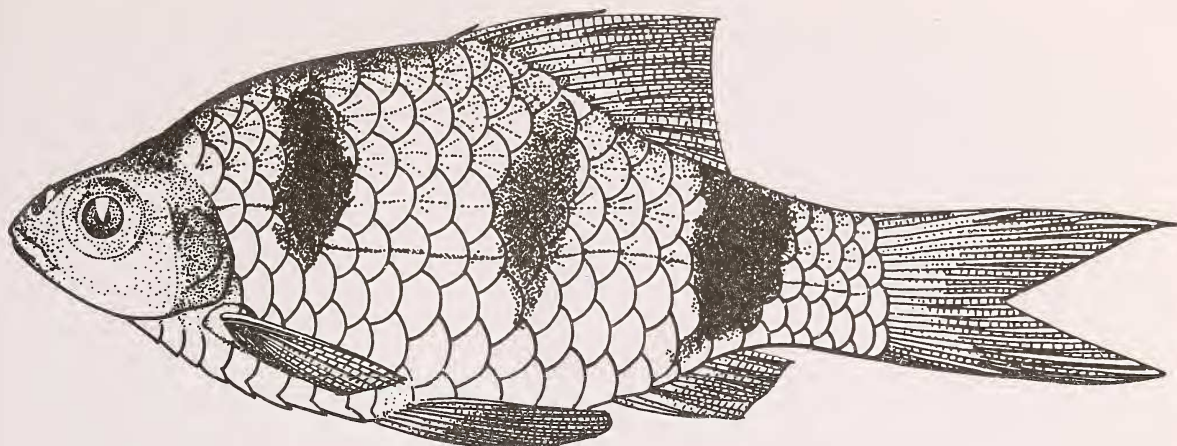


Fig. 1. *Puntius setnai* fish showing taxonomic details.

revision of genus *Puntius* by Jayaram (1991). The serrated dorsal spine and different pattern of bands than that of *P. narayani* and *P. nigrofasciatus* were noticeable features. We were in the process of comparing this barb with the holotype of *P. narayani* to check the possibility whether this barb could be a variant of already described species. This was necessary because the fishes of the genus *Puntius* are much generalised and exhibit variations, both within individuals of the same species and also within the same sex (Jayaram 1991). Apart from variation in colour, it has been stated that even the serrations on the dorsal spine later become indistinct in some species (for example in *P. phutunio* and *P. cuningii* see Jayaram 1991).

It appears certain that this barb is different from those described earlier and is similar to one described as *P. setnai*. The fish fits within the "*fasciatus*" group due to the following characters: (1) body with vertically

coloured bands ranging from 3 to 7, (2) deep bodied fish 2 to 4 times in standard length, (3) lateral line scales 18 to 24 (20 to 22 common), (4) predorsal scales most often 6 to 9, (5) lateral line complete or incomplete, (6) 4 to 8 scales between pelvic and anal fins. It appears close to "*cuningii*" complex (though members of this complex, described so far, are known to be endemic to Sri Lanka) (Jayaram 1991).

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